

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 EB-08 /087 W

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P R 300747Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7773

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MANILA 4644

CINCPAC FOR POLADD

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, XF, LY, PINS

SUBJECT: MARCOS DEFINES "AUTONOMY"

REF: (A) MANILA 4528 (NOTAL); (B) MANILA 4474 (NOTAL); (C)

KUWAIT 1615 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: DURING MARATHON TV APPEARANCE MARCH 29 MARCOS REASSURED CHRISTIAN FILIPINO MAJORITY THAT "AUTONOMY" FOR MINDANAO WOULD NOT DIFFER SIGNIFICANTLY FROM STATUS QUO. MARCOS SAID APRIL 17 "REFERENDUM/PLEBISCITE" WOULD STILL BE HELD, AND (CONTRARY TO ASSUMPTION REFTTEL A) THAT QUESTIONS (WHICH NOT YET FINALLY FORMULATED) WOULD STILL ALLOW PROVINCES TO DETERMINE OWN REGIONAL AFFILIATION, OPTING OUT OF MINDANAO REGION IF PEOPLE DESIRED. MARCOS FURTHER BLURRED ISSUE BY HARPING ON THEME THAT "AUTONOMY" IN MINDANAO MERELY PRECURSOR OF NATION-WIDE REGIONAL AUTONOMY. HE SAID "PROVISIONAL
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GOVERNMENT" BASED ON "PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION" (I.E. WITH MINORITY OF MUSLIM PERSONNEL) WOULD BE FORMED WITHIN A FEW DAYS TO BE INTERIM GOVERNMENT AND TO HELP SUPERVISE REFERENDUM. IN RESPONSE TO FREQUENTLY CRITICAL QUESTIONS, MARCOS DEFENDED LIBYAN ROLE IN NEGOTIATIONS SAYING IT NO DEROGATION OF GOP SOVEREIGNTY. HE SAID QADHAFI WANTS TO VISIT PHILIPPINES BUT NO DATE SET. ON

BALANCE WE DOUBT VERY MUCH THAT MNLF WILL ACCEPT THIS INTERPRETATION OF QADHAFI "FORMULA," PARA ONE OF WHICH CLEARLY CALLS FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF THIRTEEN-PROVINCE AUTONOMY BY PRESIDENTIAL DECISION (I.E. WITHOUT PLEBISCITE) AND DEFINES FUNCTION OF REFERENDUM AS "CONCERNING THE ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS WITHIN THE AREAS OF THE AUTONOMY" (REFTEL B). MARCOS' REMARKS WERE INTENDED FOR LOCAL PUBLIC CONSUMPTION AND HIS POSITION MAY BE MORE FLEXIBLE THAN THEY SUGGEST. HE MAY DECIDE TO PRESS AHEAD WITH PLEBISCITE AS DEFINED HERE, BUT IF HE DOES SO (AND IF WE GUAGE MNLF/ISLAMIC REACTION CORRECTLY), HE WILL RISK MAJOR UPROAR AT ISLAMIC CONFERENCE (WHICH WE NOW HEAR SCHEDULED FOR MAY 18 OR MAY 22). THUS, FURTHER DELAY OF PLEBISCITE, REVISION OF QUESTIONS, AND GENERAL CONFUSION IS POSSIBLE. END SUMMARY.

2. INTRODUCTION. PRESIDENT MARCOS MADE FOUR-AND-ONE-HALF HOUR TELEVISION APPEARANCE MARCH 29 TO EXPLAIN MINDANAO SETTLEMENT. HE FIRST HELD PRESS CONFERENCE, THEN ANSWERED QUESTIONS (ON TV AND RADIO HOOKUP) FROM CITIZENS' PANELS IN PROVINCIAL CITIES, INCLUDING FOUR IN MINDANAO (ZAMBOANGA, DAVAO, BASILAN AND COTABATO). BETWEEN PANEL SESSIONS MODERATOR FED HIM ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS PHONED IN BY CITIZENS. PARTICIPANTS WERE GENERALLY CHRISTIAN AND MIDDLE-CLASS (ONLY ONE OBVIOUS MUSLIM IN EVIDENCE) AND QUESTIONS (OFTEN CRITICAL) REFLECTED WARINESS AND HOSTILITY TOWARD "AUTONOMOUS REGION" CONCEPT.

3. NEGOTIATING HISTORY. IN OPENING STATEMENT PRESIDENT
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REVIEWED HISTORY OF NEGOTIATIONS CULMINATING IN STALEMATE AT SECOND ROUND OF TRIPOLI TALKS AFTER GOP AND MNLF HAD TABLED RADICALLY DIFFERENT DRAFT "AUTONOMY" DECREES. ISLAMIC CONFERENCE ASSISTANT SECRETARY TEVETOGLU THEN PRESENTED "COMPROMISE" WHICH ACCORDING MARCOS WAS "PRACTICALLY A CARRY-OVER OF MNLF DEMANDS, "I.E. A BLUDPRINT FOR DE FACTO SECESSION. HE THEN RECOUNTED HOW IMPASSE WAS BROKEN BY INTERVENTION OF MRS. MARCOS/QADHAFI, RESULTING IN "WISE AND BRILLIANT" FORMULA OF LIBYAN LEADER EMOBDIED IN MARCH 18-19 EXCHANGE OF CABLES (REF B). DURING QUESTION PERIOD MARCOS WAS REPEATEDLY ASKED IF MNLF HAD ACCEPTED THIS "FORMULA." IN REPLY, HE SAID LIBYAN NOTE VERBALE OF MARCH 22 (ACCORDING TO WHICH EXCHANGE OF CABLES CONSTITUTES "AGREEMENT") ALSO "IMPLIES" THAT "THERE HAVE BEEN MEETINGS BETWEEN THE LIBYAN GOVERNMENT AND THE MNLF." MARCOS SAID PROCLAMATION ESTABLISHING "AUTONOMY" AND PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT WOULD BE PUBLISHED AFTER ARRIVAL OF MNLF DELEGATION WHO WILL PARTICIPATE IN FORMULATION OF REFERENDUM QUESTIONS, ETC.

4. PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT. AT ONE POINT MARCOS SAID IT WOULD BE FORMED BY END OF MONTH (I.E. TOMORROW). HE SAID PERSONNEL OF "COMMISSION-TYPE" PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT CALLED FOR BY PARA TWO OF QADHAFI FORMULA WOULD BE SELECTED ACCORDING TO "PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION," I.E. NUMBERS OF MUSLIMS WOULD BE IN SAME RATIO AS IN TOTAL POPULATION OF THIRTEEN PROVINCES (WHICH ACCORDING EMBASSY ANALYSIS OF CENSUS FIGURES IS 31 0/0). PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT WOULD PROVIDE INTERIM ADMINISTRATION AND PREPARE FOR APRIL 17 PLEBISCITE/REFERENDUM.

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SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 OMB-01 EB-08 /087 W
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P R 300747Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY MANILA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7774
INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
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5. PLEBISCITE/REFERENDUM. MARCOS CONFIRMED THAT "PLEBISCITE/REFERENDUM" WOULD TAKE PLACE AS SCHEDULED APRIL 17. HE SAID NEW QUESTIONS WOULD BE FORMULATED, WITH PARTICIPATION OF MNLF REPS (NOT YET ARRIVED FROM MIDDLE EAST). REFERENDUM WOULD ENABLE VOTERS TO DEFINE NATURE AND POWERS OF AUTONOMOUS GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER MARCOS CONFIRMED THAT, AS ORIGINALLY PLANNED, REFERENDUM WOULD ALSO ENABLE CITIZENS OF INDIVIDUAL PORVINCES TO DECIDE WHICH REGION THEIR PROVINCE SHOULD BE IN AND (BY IMPLICATION) TO OPT OUT OF "AUTONOMOUS REGION" IN MINDANAO (IN OTHER WORDS NUMBER OF PROVINCES AS DETERMINED

BY REFERENDUM MAY BE SUBSTANTIALLY LESS THAN THIRTEEN).
FOR EXAMPLE, HE SAID, VOTERS OF PALAWAN MIGHT DECIDE TO
REMAIN IN REGION IV, WHILE REGIONS IX AND XII MIGHT OR
MIGHT NOT DECIDE TO MERGE WITH EACH OTHER. MARCOS SAID
PLEBISCITE/REFERENDUM WOULD BE "CONDUCTED" BY COMMISSION
ON ELECTIONS (COMELEC), BUT "SUPERVISED" BY PROVISIONAL
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GOVERNMENT. AS PER USUAL, MARCOS PROMISED FREE CAMPAIGN
PERIOD AS LONG AS VIOLENCE AND OTHER "OLD SOCIETY" TACTICS
NOT USED.

6. AUTONOMOUS REGION. MARCOS FURTHER BLURRED ISSUED BY
HARPING ON FAMILIAR THEME THAT MINDANAO-SULU
"AUTHONOMOUS REGION(S)" WOULD BE ONLY FIRST OF MANY TO BE
ESTABLISHED NATION-WIDE. WHILE INDIVIDUAL POWERS MIGHT
VARY SOMEWHAT, FORM OF REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS (ELECTED
REGIONAL ASSEMBLY PLUS EXECUTIVE COUNCIL) WOULD BE SIMILAR,
IN ACCORDANCE WITH FEBRUARY DECISION OF LEGISLATIVE
ADVISORY COUNCIL (BATASAN BAYAN). WITH REGARD TO MINDANAO
REGION(S), MARCOS SAID MNLF STRENGTH IN REGIONAL ASSEMBLY
WOULD DEPEND ON ELECTION RESULTS. HE ALSO MADE FOLLOWING
POINTS: (A) THERE WOULD BE NO WITHDRAWAL OF PHILIPPINE
ARMED FORCES, WHICH ARE MAINLY ENGAGED IN REHABILITATION
PROJECTS, DESPITE CREATION OF NEW "REGIONAL SECURITY
FORCE"; (B) NATIONAL GOVERNMENT WOULD REMAIN IN CHARGE
OF OIL EXPLORATION, ALTHOUGH "FAIR" SHARE OF PRODUCTION
REVENUE MIGHT GO TO REGIONS; (C) PHILIPPINES WOULD REMAIN
UNITARY NOT FEDERAL STATE, MEANING ALL POWERS NOT
SPECIFICALLY DELEGATED TO REGIONS WOULD BE RETAINED BY
CENTRAL GOVERNMENT.

7. LIBYAN ROLE. QUESTIONERS REPEATEDLY ASKED IF HEAVY
LIBYAN ROLE NOT A DEROGATION OF PHILIPPINE SOVEREIGNTY.
MARCOS REPLIED THAT ANY TYPE OF NEGOTIATION JUSTIFIED IN
ORDER TO END "RIDICULOUS, STUPID" WAR OR TO SAVE SINGLE
PHILIPPINE LIFE. SINCE LIBYANS AHD BEEN PRIMARY BACKERS
OF MNLF, PROBLEM COULD BE SOLVED ONLY BY DEALING WITH
THEM. PRESIDENT DREW ANALOGY WITH VIETNAM CLAIMING THAT
HANOI WILLINGNESS TO NEGOTIATE WITH THIRD PARTY (U.S.)
DID NOT DEROGATE DRV SOVEREIGNTY. HE DESCRIBED MINDANAO
CONFLICT AS "DIRTY" AND EXPENSIVE AND SAID IT HAD TAKEN
10,000 LIVES.

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8. QADHAFI VISIT. MARCOS SAID QADHAFI "TOLD ME HE WOULD LIKE TO VISIT PHILIPPINES," BUT NO DATE SET. (ACCORDING FORMULA WORKED OUT DURING MRS. MARCOS' FIRST VISIT TO TRIPOLI, LIBYAN LEADER WAS TO BE IN MANILA ON APRIL 7, IN THE MIDDLE OF EASTER HOLIDAYS -- HARDLY A LIKELY DATE).

9. U.S. MUTUAL DEFENSE TREATY. QUESTIONED ON RELEVANCE OF U.S. MUTUAL DEFENSE TREATY, MARCOS SAID IT DID NOT APPLY AND THAT GOP HAD NO INTENTION OF INVOKING FOREIGN ASSISTANCE TO SOLVE INTERNAL PROBLEMS (TEXT SPETEL).

10. COMMENT: MARCOS HAS GIVEN NOTICE TO WORRIED CHRISTIAN MAJORITY THAT DESPITE RECENT "AGREEMENT" WITH QADHAFI, GOP HAS NOT ALTERED ITS TRADITIONAL POSITION AND IS NOT ABOUT TO COUNTENANCE GENUINE AUTONOMY IN SOUTH. (HEADLINES ON PERFORMANCE STATED, "FEARS ON MINDANAO AUTONOMY ALLAYED"; "NO DISMEMBERMENT--FM.") HOWEVER, MARCOS INSISTENCE THAT REFERENDUM WILL ALLOW PROVINCES TO OPT OUT OF REGION APPEARS OBVIOUS CONTRAVENTION OF QADHAFI "FORMULA" WHICH STATES IN FIRST PARAGRAPH THAT THIRTEEN-PROVINCE REGION SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED BY PRESIDENTIAL DECISION AND DEFINES REFERENDUM ROLE AS "CONCERNING THE ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS WITHIN THE AREAS OF THE AUTONOMY." THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT EITHER QADHAFI OR MNLF HAVE ACCEPTED MARCOS' SINGULAR INTERPRETATION OF "FORMULA," AND SINCE CONTROVERSY AT PREVIOUS ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS WAS FOCUSED ON PLEBISCITE ISSUE, WE DOUBT VERY MUCH THAT THEY WILL DO SO. MARCOS' REMARKS WERE INTENDED FOR LOCAL PUBLIC CONSUMPTION AND HIS POSITION MAY BE MORE FLEXIBLE THEN THEY SUGGEST. HE MAY DECIDE TO PRESS AHEAD WITH PLEBISCITE AS DEFINED HERE, BUT IF HE DOES SO (AND IF WE GUAGE MNLF/ISLAMIC REACTION CORRECTLY) HE WILL RISK MAJOR UPROAR AT ISLAMIC CONFERENCE (WHICH WE NOW HEAR SCHEDULED FOR MAY 18 OR MAY 22). THUS FURTHER DELAY OF PLEBISCITE, REVISION OF QUESTIONS, AND GENERAL CONFUSION
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IS POSSIBLE.
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Message Attributes

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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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Secure: OPEN
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To: STATE
Type: TE
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